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GOP PUT HEAT ON PREZ OVER POPE SLAY PLOT

By NILES LATHEM
PRESIDENT Reagan's decision to pursue the assassination plot against Pope John Paul II was prompted by pressure from Republicans in Congress.

White House and Senate insiders said there has been a growing feeling of discontent on the congressional intelligence committees about the performance of the CIA and its chief, William Casey.

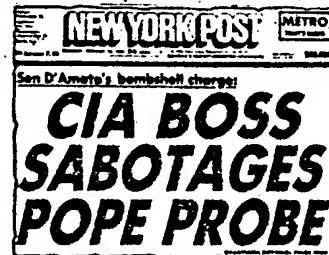
And when Republicans on the committees read recent reports about how the CIA was trying to discourage all investigation into the link between Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca and the Soviet KGB-controlled Bulgarian secret police, they made their anger known.

In one of a series of leadership meetings with the President recently, the Senate and House GOP leaders, led by Majority Leader Howard Baker, bluntly told Reagan about their concerns.

Reagan, described as "shocked" at the outburst, immediately went into action and carpeted CIA chief Casey for failing to pursue the plot to kill the Pope.

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One big gripe about

CIA chief
Casey
rapped
at stormy
meeting



Casey is over a new method he authorized for delivering to Reagan his daily intelligence briefings.

Insiders said Reagan has been receiving daily briefings from the CIA on videotape instead of verbally or written reports.

Capitol Hill officials who have seen these tapes are appalled.

Not only are the videotapes potential security risks, say officials, but "they are made as if for a dunce," said one official.

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GOP Chairman Sen. Paul Laxalt last week came out the loser in a major confrontation with the White House staff over President Reagan's reelection campaign.

A few weeks ago, Lax-

alt, in a major power play, proposed that the Republican National Committee take control of Reagan's 1984 campaign.

But Laxalt and his proposal soon ran into a brick wall of furious White House staffers, led by White House Chief of Staff James Baker, who want an independent reelection committee formed.

"The big boys were feuding like crazy," said a prominent Republican.

Laxalt last week backed off and said in a press release he favors the formation of a separate committee. He also said he will be picking the committee's chairman.

But White House aides said California political whiz Stewart Spencer has already been picked as committee chairman, even though Reagan still hasn't decided whether he will run again.